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Association of RC&D Councils

"Making Good Things Happen in Missouri"

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My name is Floyd Clark. I am a Shannon County representative to Top of the Ozarks RC&D Council and represent the Missouri Association of RC&D Councils today. I am addressing Question #5: The enhancement of rural economic growth.

To the best of my knowledge, the RC&D Program is the only Federal program where projects are determined by local rural communities. This is an extremely important program in that it makes available to our rural communities a small amount of the expertise enjoyed by larger communities where economies of scale allow them to hire a variety of experts to accomplish the goals of their communities.

Within the four elements listed in the 2002 Farm Bill, no two communities have the same specific needs. As a result, the specific projects worked on can and do vary greatly from one RC&D Council to another and may not include all four elements.

The federal government, individual states, Universities and a number of private organizations have a number of widely successful programs also addressing these four elements. Where RC&D comes in is the ability to put together a mix of these assets with other funding sources and sources of expertise, with education to fill the gaps that will always be left when programs designed to fit the whole country or a region are designed.

RC&D Councils should be evaluated to determine if they are meeting the requirements of the Farm Bill as any other program in which tax payer's money is expended. Where there is and always will be a potential problem is the method of evaluation. The 2002 Farm Bill states the program shall be evaluated to determine whether the program is effectively meeting the needs of, and the purposes identified by, states, units of government, Indian tribes, nonprofit organizations, and councils participating in, or served by, the program. As no two councils are the same this can be an arduous task to accomplish. What has to be guarded against is an attempt to evaluate based on much simpler criteria such as acres, miles or numbers that are easy to count, or determining whether the actions of the councils meet the national goals as set by the president or his administration.

I cannot stress enough the importance of continuing this program in the next farm bill and providing sufficient funding so that the remainder of the rural communities can have the assistance of a RC&D Council.

